

Message Text

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PAGE 01 THESSA 00213 281701Z

46

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2295

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C O N F I D E N T I A L THESSALONIKI 0213

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GR

SUBJECT: THESSALONIKI MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

1. SIX CANDIDATES, BLANKETING POLITICAL SPECTRUM, CONCLUDED ACTIVE CAMPAIGN FOR MAYOR HERE MARCH 28. GIVEN LARGE FIELD, NO SINGLE CANDIDATE EXPECTED TO RECEIVE REQUIRED MAJORITY VOTE MARCH 30 AND RUNOFF ELECTION BETWEEN TWO HIGHEST VOTE-GETTERS WILL BE HELD APRIL 6, WITH WINNER'S SLATE RECEIVING 21 SEATS IN MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, AND LOSER'S TEN, INCLUDING RUNNER-UP CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR.

2. APPARENT FRONT-RUNNER IS FORMER LOCAL LIBERAL PARTY LIGHT, AND APPOINTED INTERIM MAYOR IN 1974, DEMETRIOS ZANNAS, REPRESENTING CENTER OF POLITICAL SPECTRUM, WITH SPRINKLING OF CONSERVATIVES AND ONE SOCIALIST ON STRONG MUNICIPAL COUNCIL SLATE. ALTHOUGH ZANNAS' PERSONAL CAMPAIGN APPEARANCES HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT LACK-LUSTER, HE HAS GOOD RECORD OF OPPOSITION TO JUNTA, PARALLEL TO THAT OF HIS IMPRISONED COUSIN PAVLOS, AND A SOUND, WELL-FINANCED ORGANIZATION. HIS SUPPORTERS PREDICT A 35 PERCENT VOTE SUNDAY.

3. THE FAR LEFT, COMMUNIST CANDIDATE, LAWYER MICHAEL
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PAGE 02 THESSA 00213 281701Z

PAPADOPOULOS, ENJOYING THE ANNOUNCED SUPPORT OF PASOK

AND OF COMMUNIST LEADER ILIOU, AS WELL AS EXTREME SOCIALIST AND OTHER COMMUNIST ELEMENTS, IS EXPECTED TO MAKE A STRONG SHOWING. WITH A WELL-ORGANIZED, WELL-DISCIPLINED CAMPAIGN, ALTHOUGH SOME OF HIS SUPPORT LIES OUTSIDE THE ELECTORAL DISTRICT, PAPADOPOULOS MAY CAPTURE AS MUCH AS 30 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN THE MARCH 30 ROUND.

4. OTHER STRONG CANDIDATES ARE: (1) VLASSIOS GOGOUSIS, A CONVERTED CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE, WHOSE CREDENTIALS HAVE BEEN SUSPECT BECAUSE OF HIS WORLD WAR II RECORD AS AN ELAS GENERAL, BUT WHO IS EXPECTED TO APPEAL TO MANY NEA DEMOKRATIA FOLLOWERS AS A MAYOR WHO COULD WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH THE CARAMANLIS GROUP IN ATHENS; (2) CONSTANTINOS TSIROS, A LEFT-OF-CENTER, CU FOLLOWER, LAST ELECTED MAYOR OF THESSALONIKI, WHO HAS A STRONG SLATE WHICH INCLUDES A FEW CONSERVATIVES. HE IS CRITICIZED BY SOME, HOWEVER, AS BEING TOO OLD (68) AND OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE CURRENT POLITICAL SCENE; (3) STAVROS PASCHOS, PRESENT MUNICIPAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT, WHOSE POLITICS LIE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN CU AND ND, AND WHO ENJOYS SUPPORT OF FORMER CU APOSTATE AND ND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT GEORGE BAKATSELOS.

5. FINAL CANDIDATE, INDEPENDENT-CONSERVATIVE GEO. POUNTZIKOGLOU IS NOT CONSIDERED SERIOUS CONTENDER.

6. CAMPAIGN FOR MAYOR (FIRST HERE SINCE 1966) HAS GENERATED CONSIDERABLE LOCAL INTEREST WITH DOWNTOWN AREA BLANKETED WITH LEAFLETS, POSTERS AND HANDOUTS. CONGEN BELIEVES MOST INTERESTING ASPECT WILL BE PERCENTAGE OF SUPPORT FOR COMMUNIST SLATE, WHICH EXPECTED TO BE HIGHER HERE THAN DURING NOVEMBER PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. SHOULD PAPADOPOULOS PLACE AMONG TOP TWO MARCH 30 (WHICH IS BY NO MEANS DISCOUNTED HERE), AND FACE ZANNAS OR POSSIBLY GOGOUSIS OR PASCHOS IN APRIL 6 RUN-OFF, THINKING HERE IS THAT HE WILL PICK UP ONLY FEW MORE PERCENTAGE POINTS FROM FARTHER LEFT CU ADHERENTS, AND THAT HIS OPPONENT SHOULD COME IN HANDILY WITH UPWARDS OF 60 PERCENT OF FINAL

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PAGE 03 THESSA 00213 281701Z

VOTE.
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